

WYCOMBE HUMBLLED

BY 'NOVA'

Hitchin 4; Wycombe Wanderers 1

"Wanted—one centre-forward. Must be good in air and able to shoot with both feet. Also required two non-stop tireless players able to form link between defence and attack. Any one fitting either bill should apply to the secretary of Wycombe Wanderers in writing or by phone."

THIS is the appeal Wycombe Wanderers should put out after their shocking display—probably the worst of the season—against Hitchin on Tuesday evening.

The home side, only one place above Wycombe in the Isthmian League table before this game, proved a faster most enthusiastic team—streets ahead of dull, unimaginative Wycombe.

This was more than just another defeat. It was humiliating for every Wycombe official and supporter to see their side humbly tumble to defeat, without even a fight.

Few of the Wanderers players can be proud of their efforts in this game. Dennis Syrett was cool and unruffled throughout and could not be blamed for any of the goals. Alistair Lewis bottled out speedy winger John Graves, but his only assistance came from pivot Peter Roystone.

NON-EXISTENT

As for the two link men in the Wanderers' 4-2-4 system—they were non-existent. In the forward line the main idea seemed either to work the ball across the face of the goal, and back again, or to float high crosses to the far post.

Only young David Bassett seemed to have any notion of where the goal lay. But too often he was expected to do his own foraging as well as finishing off the move.

For the Wycombe supporters, however, the greatest tragedy of all was to see their brilliant wing-half Charlie Gale performing like a novice at centre-forward.

Apart from scoring the opening goal within two minutes of the start with a long-range shot that skidded past the goalkeeper,

Gale did little else. His inability to gather the ball and turn quickly made him an easy target for the swift-tackling Hitchin defenders.

MAIN HOPE

With Len Worley snuffed out completely by Derek Gibbs, Wycombe's main hope should have been to do the simple things quickly. Danny Desmond and Tony Horne set the example by a bout of inter-passing that finished with the centre-forward pushing a shot past Syrett into the net.

Hitchin's attacking ideas revolved mainly around England wing-half Barry King. But instead of the Wanderers detailing a man to mark him, King was given the freedom of the pitch.

Graves outpaced a struggling John Beck and lobbed a pass across the goal for Horne to score and ten minutes later Waldock was allowed to cross the ball for Horne to add another.

Hitchin eased off in the second half but even at half-pace they easily contained a Wycombe side which seemed devoid of any attacking ideas.

Despite moving John Cooper into attack, the forward line was pathetically slow and it was no surprise when Horne completed his hat-trick.

Left-winger Horne's hat-trick only served to illustrate that if a side is to play to a system, the four defenders must not move upfield. John Beck, admirable though his attacking play was, should have got in closer contact with this player.